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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUDAPEST 001850

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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/NCE AND EUR/SCE; PLEASE PASS TO NSC FOR
ADAM STERLING

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [HU](#) [SR](#) [KO](#)

SUBJECT: MR. KOSTUNICA GOES TO BUDAPEST

Classified By: P/E Counselor Eric Gaudiosi; reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In a visit described as "neither as bad as we feared or as positive as we hoped," Serbian Prime Minister Kostunica met with Hungarian officials in Budapest November 13. Prime Minister Gyurcsany encouraged Kostunica to engage fully in finding a diplomatic solution to the question of Kosovo status, underscoring that the IC will ultimately move forward with or without Serbian input. Gyurcsany emphasized Hungary's desire to actively support the entire region's integration into Euro-Atlantic structures and be "a good friend to Serbia," but made clear that there will be no Hungarian departure from the NATO/EU consensus. End Summary.

¶2. (C) According to Ambassador Karoly Banai, Foreign and Security Policy Advisor to the PM, Gyurcsany and Kostunica spent more than two hours together November 13. Gyurcsany urged Belgrade to negotiate in earnest with the Kosovars and to cooperate with the Troika, lest Serbia be "left out" of final decisions which the International Community will take.

¶3. (C) Gyurcsany emphasized Hungary's commitment to be "a good friend" to Serbia within NATO and the EU, highlighting the prospects of Euro-Atlantic integration for Belgrade and the protections for ethnic Serbs offered by the Ahtisaari Plan. Serbia, he concluded, had the opportunity to shape the diplomatic process but could not stop a status decision. Nor, he warned, should it contemplate a military solution.

¶4. (C) According to Banai, Kostunica made no reference to Russia or to the question of the ethnic Hungarian minority in the Vojvodina. (Note: Kostunica was accompanied by a representative of the Vojvodina and Gyurcsany by a representative of Hungary's ethnic Serb population. End note.) Banai's overall assessment is that there will be no Serbian action "until the last minute ... if then" given concerns regarding the domestic political dynamic.

¶5. (C) Banai described Kostunica's response as "not happy but not hostile," his arguments as legalistic and "backward-looking," - longing for the Serbian boundaries of a pre-WWI past - and his overall demeanor as unemotional and "unwell."

¶6. (C) In a subsequent meeting with FIDESZ Parliamentary Faction Leader Tibor Navracsics, Kostunica made reference to ongoing discussions with Kosovar Albanian reps to discuss a "Hong Kong solution" that would grant "independence in all but name." Navracsics believes, however, that Kostunica recognizes the inevitability of independence even though he made reference to the prospect of instability caused by "two - or more - Albanian states in the region."

¶7. (C) Kostunica took a conciliatory line regarding the Vojvodina, assuring Navracsics that his government will provide all legal protections to the Hungarian communities there, including continued cultural autonomy. Navracsics reports that Kostunica emphasized his party's membership in the European People's Party (EPP) as a point in common with FIDESZ, and pledged to continue outreach efforts to Belgrade to make clear Hungary's support for Serbia's Euro-Atlantic integration.

¶8. (C) Kostunica's softer line on the Vojvodina contrasts with the approach taken by FM Jeremic. Sources on the staff of the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee describe his meetings in Budapest last month as "subtle blackmail." Jeremic reportedly told opposition representatives that "independence in Kosovo means war in the Balkans...and war in the Balkans means refugees in Hungary and in ethnic Hungarian areas in Serbia."
FOLEY